

Hazrat Maulana Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani Sahab (may his blessings remain on us for a long time),
Vice Principal Darul Uloom Karachi

Memories

(Episode 2)

My respected mother (Respected Nafeesa Khatoon Sahiba), may Allah Ta'ala keep pouring the rain of His mercy on her at all times, was an ideal mother and an exemplary household lady. She belonged to a famous Ansari family in Deoband, and the way she fulfilled the rights of my respected father's (may Allah Ta'ala have mercy on him) companionship, in difficult as well as easy times, is a separate topic in itself. I have also written something about it at the time of her passing away which is included in my book *Nuqoosh-e-Raftagan*. She was also very devout in worship and an ascetic lady. Her (daily) routine of recitation of the Quran, *Zikr* (remembrance of Allah Ta'ala) and *Nafil* prayers was not missed as long as she remained conscious.

But for us she was an existence of love and affection, all moments of whose day and night were dedicated to providing us with comfort. And for this she always sacrificed her own comfort and ease. She used to love all her children equally, but due to being the youngest I perhaps received the most love and care from her. A result of this was that until quite a big age I used to eat from her hand, and would not eat unless she fed me morsel by morsel. Besides this, if my respected mother ever had to go to a nearby house, it was not possible that I did not go with her.

In those times in a town like Deoband there were no automatic modes of transport such as cars. Those people who had not travelled outside Deoband may not even have seen a car. The best we could get was a Tonga (horse-cart), which could be used to traverse the distances inside Deoband, and even that was only for males. For Muslim ladies to sit in a Tonga even while wearing a Burqa was considered inappropriate. If the distance was very far such that traveling without a Tonga would be difficult, then a veil would be put on all sides of the Tonga and burqa-clad ladies would sit inside that veil. Otherwise to travel from one neighbourhood to another a *Palki* was used, which is called *Doli* in Hindi language. This *Doli* was carried by two people on their shoulders, who were called *Kuhar*. When a lady had to travel in a *Doli* then the *Kuhar* would put it inside the house then go outside. The lady would sit in it, and sometimes would carry a stone with her so that when the *Kuhar* lift the *Doli* they should not even know the actual weight of the lady. Sometimes small children would want to enjoy the ride with their mothers. In this case the stone was not needed. So when my respected mother would go to any house from her family's side she would take me with her. Due to the veil all around the *Doli* we would not know where we are passing by, but we would enjoy the jolts of this bumping and bouncing *Doli*, which we would say in the language of Deoband that I'm enjoying the *Baariyan* (which means that I'm having fun in the ride).

From the children of my respected father (may Allah Ta'ala have mercy on him) we were nine brothers and sisters. The eldest sister was respected Na'eema Sahiba (deceased) whom we used to call *Aapa Jaan*. Her marriage took place before I was born. Two of her daughters and one son were born before my birth. Even though she had a very pleasant demeanor, and all my siblings had an open and frank relationship with her, I felt such awe and fear from her since childhood that it was even more than the awe and fear I felt from my mother. Perhaps a reason for this was that her house was at some distance from ours in a neighbourhood which was called *Teela* (Mound). It was a small mound but to us it was nothing short of a mountain. This sister of ours used to live on that mound with her husband Hakeem Sayyad Shareef Husain Sahab (deceased) who, due to the refinement and elegance of his character, seemed to be like the Nawab of Oudh, and he was very particular about cleanliness in his house. He could not tolerate even a small crease on his bed.

Whenever I visited their house I would play with my similar-aged nephew and nieces. One day while playing I climbed the bed of my sister with my dirty feet. She frowned at me and said: "*Bas qadam ranja na farmao*"¹. I heard the word *qadam ranja* for the first time at that occasion, but more than the meaning of that word and more than the sarcasm hidden in that word, those frowning eyes made their place in my heart as a continuous source of awe, which took many years to change to some amount of frankness. At that time I didn't even know that looking at someone with anger like how she looked at me is called "frowning". I heard the word "frowning" for the first time when *Aapa Jaan* mentioned this event to my siblings. This eldest sister of mine passed away at the age of only thirty four when I was thirteen years old. May Allah Ta'ala bestow on her the blessings and comforts of Jannah Al-Firdaus. It is difficult to find an example of the self-respect and honor with which she passed her life, despite difficult financial situations. At this point an event about her is anxious to come on the tongue of the pen.

As I have mentioned she often faced difficult financial situations after marriage. Once, in such a situation, she asked our respected father that please make *dua* (prayers) for me that Allah Ta'ala bestows on me the opportunity to go for Hajj. Our respected father said: "Do you desire to go for Hajj?" When she replied in the affirmative he said: "No, you don't have any desire". She said in bewilderment: "I'm telling the truth I have great desire to go for Hajj". At this our respected father asked: "Have you saved any money for this?" When she replied in the negative he said: "This means that your desire is just on the tongue. If your desire was real you would have saved for it." She presented the excuse: "If any money were left (from the income) then only I could save." Our respected father said to her: "Can't you save even one *aana* (one-sixteenth of a rupee)?" She replied: "This much I can save but how can Hajj be performed with this?" Our respected father replied: "When a slave takes a step for a good deed according to his capability then firstly there is help from Allah Ta'ala, and even if one is not able to carry out this good deed then its reward will definitely be received Inshallah. But nothing can be accomplished just by having desire, without taking any practical steps."

This event was soon forgotten. After a very long time in 1956 when she passed away, and her inheritors examined her things, a small bag made of cloth was found on which was written "Money for Hajj".

¹ This is an idiom the actual meaning of which is "Don't visit us" but the literal meaning has connotations towards the feet and also towards hurting someone.

When it was opened approximately sixty five rupees were found inside. When our respected father saw this bag, his eyes spontaneously filled with tears, and at that time he narrated to us the entire story. Thereafter our respected father spent this money for the Hajj-e-Badal of our sister, and in this way had her Hajj-e-Badal performed.

Later one time our respected father was in the plain of Arafat during Hajj. During a short period of drowsiness he saw in a dream that *Aapa Jaan* is climbing Jabal Ar-Rahmah, the mountain in Arafat. In this way Allah Ta'ala fulfilled the Hajj of his bondswoman. May Allah Ta'ala have mercy on her.

The sister younger than her is respected 'Ateeqa Khatoon Sahiba (may Allah Ta'ala extend her shade on us). Mashallah she is much engaged in worship and spends a very organized life. She also has the honour of having done *Baiy'ah* with Hazrat Hakeem Ul Ummah Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi (may Allah Ta'ala have mercy on him). And today (23 February 2017 / 25 Jamadil Oola 1437 A.H), to my knowledge there is nobody alive in the world besides her who had the honour of having done *Baiy'ah* directly with Hazrat Hakeem Ul Ummah Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi (may Allah Ta'ala have mercy on him).

It was the habit of my respected father that he used to spend Ramadan, together with his family, in Thana Bhawan with Hazrat Hakeem Ul Ummah (may Allah Ta'ala have mercy on him). For this purpose they often had to stay at Hazrat Thanvi's own house at the room on the second floor. This room was such that there was a courtyard in front of Hazrat's room, and at the end of the courtyard were the stairs which led to this room. Since there was only one toilet, Hazrat had made this arrangement that at a particular place in the courtyard was placed a lamp. This lamp was an indicator to the residents of the room above that the toilet is available for them to use, and there is arrangement for ladies to use the toilet. If the lamp was not at its place then this was a sign that the toilet is occupied.

This sister of mine tells us that our respected father used to observe extreme respect when in this room, and also used to remind us children that there should not be any amount of noise, lest we become a source of discomfort for Hazrat Thanvi. I was a small girl at that time, and was not even old enough to observe Hijab. During one such visit our respected father told me to go to Hazrat and request him to do *Baiy'ah*. At first I considered it a joke thinking that how can a small girl do *Baiy'ah*? So when our respected father repeated the same thing I asked him: "Can kids do *Baiy'ah*?" Our father replied: "Yes, they can do *Baiy'ah*". After this I asked the respected wife of Hazrat Thanvi that I want to do *Baiy'ah* with Hazrat. So the respected wife of Hazrat Thanvi told Hazrat that this little girl wants to get *Baiy'ah*. Hazrat called for me and said: "Tell me, you won't take *Baiy'ah* as a (futile activity like the) play of dolls?" When I replied in the negative Hazrat gave the end of a cloth in my hand and took the other end in his own hand, and did *Baiy'ah*. This is how she got the honour of being *Baiy'ah* in her childhood.¹

The marriage of this sister of mine had also taken place before my birth, and she even had a daughter before I was born and a son who was born at around the same time as me. She used to live with her husband and children in front of our house, towards the western side. I was technically the uncle of two daughters and a son of respected Na'eema Sahiba Marhuma and one daughter of respected 'Ateeqa

¹ It should be clear that the real purpose of *Baiy'ah* is only fulfilled after reaching puberty, but the blessings of entering the *Silsila* (chain leading up to Rasulullah (peace be upon him)) can be acquired even in childhood.

Sahiba Marhuma, but these nephews and nieces of mine were older than me, and all four of them were ahead of me in the *maktab* (elementary school) of aunt Amatul Hannan Sahiba (whose mention will be made later Inshallah). But since the age difference was not much, they were more my friends than nephews, and were my only friends. Amongst them there was only one nephew, who later became known as Maulana Hakeem Musharraf Husain Sahab (may Allah Ta'ala have mercy on him). So my friendship was mostly with him. He would be the lead in all our games and I would be his sidekick.

Anyway! Due to the great difference in age with these two sisters such that even their children were older than me, instead of having a relationship of sister-like frankness with them I felt their awe and fear as one would feel from one's teacher.

After these two sisters the third was our eldest brother respect Muhammad Zaki Kaifi Sahab (may Allah Ta'ala have mercy on him), whom we used to call *Bhai Jaan*. He had studied the *Dars-e-Nizami* (Islamic curriculum) at Darul Uloom Deoband until intermediate books, but then the situation became such that he could not continue his studies. He took care of the Islamic bookstore Darul Isha'at which our respected father had established. But his knowledge, especially in the topics of history and biographies, Tasawwuf and the lives and biographies of the senior scholars of Darul Uloom Deoband, and their sayings and writings was so vast that even good scholars could not match him. Other than this he was *Baiy'ah* to Hazrat Hakeem Ul Ummah Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi (may Allah Ta'ala have mercy on him), and was liked by all elders. Hazrat Mufti Muhammad Hasan Sahab, Hazrat Maulana Muhammad Idrees Sahab Kandhlavi, Hazrat Maulana Dawood Ghaznawi, Hazrat Maulana Rasool Khan Sahab (may Allah Ta'ala have mercy on them all) used to love him, and whenever they passed by his bookstore at Anarkali they would visit him for some time, and bestow him with the blessings of their company. *Bhai Jaan* had special interest in recitation of the Quran, and would complete its recitation ten to fifteen times during Ramadan. He was an excellent poet and his work titled "*Kaifiyat*", to which I have written a preface, has gained widespread popularity. His marriage took place in 1946, when I was three years old, with the daughter of Hazrat Maulana Muhammad Mubeen Khateeb (may Allah Ta'ala have mercy on him) who was a student of Hazrat Shaykhul Hind (may Allah Ta'ala have mercy on him) and the ancestral *Khateeb* (one who gives the *Khutba*) of the *Eid Gah* (place where Eid prayer takes place) of Darul Uloom Deoband. Besides his marriage I also remember that before his marriage our respected father (may Allah Ta'ala have mercy on him) had built an extension of two rooms in the northern side of our house. By that time he was the manager of our respected father's (may Allah Ta'ala have mercy on him) bookstore Darul Isha'at. He was also at least fourteen years older than me so besides the two elder sisters, I also felt great awe and fear of him.

He was also very interested in calligraphy, and he would sometimes write some poem or words of wisdom in a beautiful writing on a large piece of paper or cardboard to fulfill this interest. Once he was busy in this hobby when he left for some work. I went there and in trying to imitate him hit the inkpot so badly that it fell and the entire ink spread over his work. While I had his fear and awe in my heart, this fear was one-sided and he had never hit me. After this mistake I felt certain that the fear I felt would become a practical reality today, but I did not know how severe it would be so that I could be mentally prepared for it. So I left the ink and the paper in their place and ran towards my other brothers and sisters, and I would ask each of them: "How hard does *Bhai Jaan's* hand hit?" (meaning that when *Bhai*

Jaan slaps then how hard does it hit?) My siblings, who until now did not know what I had done, were wondering why I would need to investigate the strength of *Bhai Jaan's* slap. Later when I told them the story all of them laughed, and when *Bhai Jaan* came to know of what I had done he also, instead of giving a practical explanation of my investigation, considered it humorous. From then on this sentence of mine became a joke which is mentioned in gatherings as an addition to the list of examples which indicate my smartness.

Later *Bhai Jaan* made me so frank with himself that this frankness reached the level of friendship, and sometimes I would feel embarrassed after having a light hearted conversation with him that I should not be crossing the limits (of respect). Due to this frankness whatever time I got to spend with him felt like a blessing. He also kept a deep watch on our activities at Darul Uloom, and would bestow upon us his valuable advices. From the time I started to write he would read each of my writings and would give beneficial analysis and advices regarding it. I wrote the book “Hazrat Muawiya and Historical Facts” on his request about which I will write later Inshallah.¹

¹ At his passing away I wrote about him with some detail in *Al-Balagh* which has been published in my book *Nuqoosh-e-Raftagan*.